

MINUTES (Unapproved)
UTAH CONSERVATION COMMISSION (UCC) MEETING

Regular Meeting, June 6, 2007

Escalante, UT

ATTENDANCE:

Chairman (Standing UCC Ex-officio):

Leonard M. Blackham, *Commissioner, Utah
Department of Agriculture and Food (UDAF)*

Appointed Soil Conservation District (CD) Supervisor

UCC Members:

Paul Leishman, *Zone 1*
Dee Waldron, *Zone 2*
Wendell Stembridge, *Zone 3*
Stanley Wood, *Zone 4*
Ralph Staheli, *Zone 5*
Ed Bench, *Zone 6*
Bob Barry, *Zone 7*

Appointed CD Alternate UCC Members:

S. Bruce Karren, *Zone 1 via conference call*
Ben Thurgood, *Zone 2*
Allen Henrie, *Zone 5*
Joe Begay, *Zone 7*

Standing Ex-Officio UCC Members:

Willard "Bill" Rasmussen, *President, Utah
Association of Conservation Districts (UACD)*
Robert Newhall, *UT State University Extension
(USU) acting for V. Philip Rasmussen*
Walt Baker, *Water Quality Division, Utah
Department of Environmental*
Mike Styler, *Utah Department of Natural Resources
(UDNR)*
Tim Higgs, *Utah Weed Supervisors Association*
Jay Tanner, *UDAF State Grazing Advisory Board*
Ruland Gill, *UDAF State Grazing Advisory Board*

Conservation Partners Representatives:

Todd Nielson, *Natural Resource Conservation Service
(NRCS-UT), USDA Acting for Sylvia Gillen State
Conservationist-Utah*
Bruce Barrett, *Bureau of Land Management, USDI*
Chuck Gay, *USU Extension*
A. J. Martinez, *Watershed Program Specialist, Utah
Dept of Natural Resources*
Gordon Younker, *Executive Vice President UACD*
Larry Crist, *U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service*
Lisa Bryant, *USDI Bureau of Land Management*
Ronald G. Torgerson, *State Institutional Trust Lands
Agency*
Thayne Mickelson, *Zone 1 Coordinator, UACD*
Desiree Van Dyke, *Zone 2 Coordinator, UACD*
Ray Loveless, *Zone 3 Coordinator, UACD*

ABSENT & EXCUSED

Allen Brown, *Zone 3*; Randy Greenhalgh, *Zone 4*; and Jerry Steglich, *Zone 6, Alternate UCC Member
Designees*

Conservation Partners Representatives con't

David Pace, *Zone 4 Coordinator, UACD*
Tyce Palmer, *Zone 5 Coordinator, UACD*
Darrell Gillman, *Zone 6 Coordinator, UACD*
Hal Lemon, *Zone 7 Coordinator, UACD*
Troy Forrest, *UACD assigned to UDAF Grazing
Improvement Program*
William Merkley, *UACD assigned to UDAF Grazing
Improvement Program*

Department of Agriculture and Food:

Kathleen Clarke, *Assistant Commissioner*
Clair Allen, *Director, Plant Industry Div.*
Bill Hopkin, *Director, Grazing Improvement Program*
K. N. "Jake" Jacobson, *UCC Admin. Officer, Div.
C&RM*
Sherie Edginton, *UCC Secretary, Div. C&RM*
Richard Leyba, *Loan Specialist, Agricultural Loans
Section, Div. C&RM*
Nancy Betzing, *Accounting Tech. Agricultural Loans
Section, Div. C&RM*
Roy Gunnell, *Environmental Scientist, Div. C&RM*
Stephen Burningham, *Program Mngr, Plant Industry
Division*
Dave Cook, *Utah Grazing Improvement Program*
Tom Tippetts, *Utah Grazing Improvement Program*

Guests:

Darrell Johnson, *State Grazing Advisory Board*
Rex Sacco, *State Grazing Advisory Board*
Carl Adams, *DEQ, Water Quality*
Harry Judd, *DEQ, Water Quality*
Mike Reichert, *DEQ, Water Quality*
Scott Daly, *DEQ, Water Quality*
Matt Seddon, *Deputy Utah State Historical
Preservation Officer*
Staci Strenkert, *Envirothon Coord. UACD*
Lisa Bryant, *Bureau of Land Management, USDI*
Mike Domeier, *State Soil Scientist, NRCS*
Vicki Tyler, *RC&D Coordinator, NRCS*
Wayne Urie, *Castleland RC&D, NRCS*
Shane A. Green, *NRCS*
Kim Rodela, *Governors Office of Planning*
Laura Ault, *Governors Office of Planning*
Larry, Lichthardt, *Bureau of Land Management,
USDI*
Scott Boyer, *USU Extension*
Tim Garcia, *US Forest Service*

SUMMARY OF COMMISSION ACTIONS

[Note – this is the first official Commissioner meeting after the 2007 Legislative action took affect that changed the name of the state commission from the Utah Soil Conservation Commission (USCC) to the Utah Conservation Commission (UCC). The word “soil” was also dropped in this legislation from the name of the state’s 38 soil conservation districts so they are now named “conservation districts” or CDs. These law changes are reflected in the Utah Code Commission law Title 4, Chapter 18 and District’s law Title 17A-800 and took affect in April 2007.]

1. The Minutes of the March 5, 2007 USCC meeting approved Page 2
2. Approval of 4 UCC Business Items Page 4

UCC MEETING - CALL TO ORDER

Utah Dept. of Agriculture & Food (UDAF) Commissioner Leonard M. Blackham, Utah Conservation Commission (UCC) Chairman, called the meeting to order at 12:36 P.M.

APPROVAL OF MARCH 2007 MEETING MINUTES

Chairman Blackham indicated that copies of the March 5, 2007 USCC meeting minutes draft were distributed with this meeting notice. He asked for action on these minutes. **The motion was made by Mr. Stanley Wood to approve the March 5, 2007 USCC meeting minutes as distributed, seconded by Mr. Bill Rasmussen. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.**

CHAIRMAN’S COMMENTS

Chairman Blackham reported that progress is being made in getting conservation on the ground through out the state at an accelerated rate through ARDL loans, Grazing Improvement program projects and the Utah Partners for Conservation and Development (UtahPCD) Watershed Restoration Initiative (WRI) programs. There was a first of its kind meeting held in April, in Ephraim, with the UtahPCD WRI regional team members, the UDAF regional Grazing Advisory Boards and Grazing Improvement Program (GIP) staff and Utah Association of Conservation District zone staff to coordinate and collaborate their activities and to provide input to the mission and goals of the WRI program. There will be a more detailed report of this meeting from A.J. Martinez, one of the co-chairs of the UtahPCD WRI state core team, at the UtahPCD Directors Council meeting immediately following this meeting

UCC COMMISSIONERS REPORTS

CONSERVATION DISTRICTS & ZONES 4 & 6 REPORTS

Mr. Bill Rasmussen, Utah Association of Conservation Districts (UACD) President, handed out a flowchart on the make up of UACD. UACD was successful in encouraging the 2007 Utah Legislature to appropriate addition FY08 funds for the state’s conservation districts in the amount of \$200,000 of on-going pass-through funds and \$50,000 for cost of living increases for UACD & CD staff. This will allow for an increase in support to the districts including a \$40,000 increase in the CD Supervisor Expense Reimbursement Account (SERA) and ongoing support through UACD and the CDs for the UDAF GIP support. Because of the increase in SERA funding UACD is

recommending that the SERA policy be amended so that meeting hourly pay be increased from \$12.00 to \$15.00, along with Supervisors being paid for travel time to approved meetings. There are 2 UACD employees that commit 85% or more of their time and 1 employee commits 33% of his time and 1 contract employee in the Uintah Basin to the UDAF GIP program. In 2006 fiscal year there were 34 UACD and CD employees throughout the state and a budget of just over \$2 million. In FY08, UACD & CD employees will increase to 41, and UACD will have a budget of \$2.25 million. There will be additional Supervisor training scheduled for January 2008 and UACD/CD employee training is planned for June 27, 2007. Most of the Conservation Districts have paid their UACD annual dues.

Zone 4 & 6 handed out written reports showing the accomplishments and goals of the two zones. Contact the Commission office or zone offices for a copy of these reports.

STATE GRAZING ADVISORY BOARD REPORT

Mr. Jay Tanner, chair of the UDAF State Grazing Advisory Board, reported that GIP has hired coordinators for each the state's five grazing improvement regions. The FY07 funds that were allocated from the legislature has all were dedicated to projects. Applications are available on the UDAF website for FY08 Grazing Improvement project grants. The sign up period for FY2008 projects will end July 1st. After that date the applications that have been received will be ranked for funding by the region and state grazing advisory boards. GIP will be participating in a questionnaire developed by Dr. Bruce Godfrey, from USU, that will be sent to all the cattle and sheep producers in the state. They are asking for participation in the survey.

COUNTY WEED SUPERVISOR ASSOCIATION REPORT

Mr. Tim Higgs, the association's 2007 president, reported that last year there was \$241,948 non-county funds available for weed control projects across the state. This included \$85,000 funded by the U.S. Forest Service, \$145,000 from UDAF GIP and close to \$14,000 from APHIS. With matching funds to these grants, mostly from the counties, there was \$766,809 put on the ground for weed control projects. There was 19,951 acres treated for weeds, and 54,000 Tamarisk beetles release for 6 biological projects. The Association traveled to Washington DC for the National Weed Awareness Week and spoke to all five Utah representatives in congress and the senate concerning noxious weeds. This year there has been 17 projects funded. One of the projects funded is a weed identification seminar. He encouraged the members to continue to support the weed calendars.

UCC & CONSERVATION DISTRICTS (CD) BUSINESS ITEMS

AGRICULTURE RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT LOAN (ARDL) PROGRAM ACTION

Mr. Richard Leyba, UDAF Loan Specialist, reported on the ARDL program status as of May 31, 2007. The total Legislative appropriation is \$18,421,530. The principal balance of loans is \$19,913,777, with \$1,819,277 in undisbursed funds, totaling \$21,733,055. There are 726 contracted loans, and 89 active applications. The average loan size is \$29,935. There were 7 loans 30 days past due. Principal repayments year to date are \$3,343,080., interest payments are \$537,322., penalty payments are \$11,502., totaling \$3,891,905. There have been, 94 loans paid off and 95 new loans, at a total of \$4,646,328. The average new loan size is \$48,909. \$178,705 was paid to UACD in TA fees.

There is \$503,915 in the ARDL bank account, and \$8,701,291 in the investment account. There is \$1,819,277 in undisbursed loans. There is \$3,962,281 in loan applications in process and \$2,521,204 in zone allocations, totaling \$6,483,485.

Mr. Leyba reported on one loan that was approved previously by the Commission's ARDL Loan Approval Committee. The loan is for KG Ranch LLC. There is an existing loan for \$180,639. With this new request for \$34,424, for a new pivot system, the total loan is \$215,063. ARDL policy requires committed approval when taking a second position on real estate behind a first where the first is larger than the second. However ARDL is the party holding the first position.

STATE & LOCAL FARMLAND DESIGNATION TOOL INITIATIVE

Mr. Mike Domeier, NRCS-UT State Soil Scientist, reported there is urban pressure to develop Utah's farmland. It was decided in a recent meeting to provide local government and private citizens, tools for decision making on protecting local farmland. The Governors Office of Planning had already found that farmland needs to be protected. With the help of them, NRCS's soil survey designations and the AGRC's web database a template could be created to help preserve endangered farmland.

Ms. Laura Ault, Governors Office of Planning, reported on the creation of a website that local governments could use to help save farmland. There are different layers of mapping showing private land ownership, irrigated land, streams and rivers at the State, county and municipality level. Layers such as wildlife protection could be added to the website. Existing conservation easements are also shown on the website.

Mr. Domeier handed out maps showing important and existing farmland in Utah. They also showed urban development and ownership of land in Utah. Duchesne, Sevier, Piute and western Kane counties have yet to be surveyed. The importance of mapping important and prime farmland could lead to state and federal funding for conservation easements and other projects, both statewide and locally.

UCC & CD ADMINISTRATIVE PROGRAMS UPDATE & ACTION ITEMS

Mr. Jake Jacobson reported that the presentation of UCC business was made in the morning UACD board meeting. It was recommended by the board that the Commission approval for the revision of the FY2008 budget, the continuation of the Graham Quate award, the revision of the MOU between the UCC and UACD and the increase of the reimbursement rate of CD Supervisors. **A motion was made by Mr. Ruland Gill to amend some grammatical errors in the SERA policy update and approve the 4 issues listed above, seconded by Mr. Dee Waldron. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.**

NRCS-UT OPERATIONAL EFFICENCY RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. Todd Nielson, NRCS-UT State Administrative Office, reported that NRCS-UT has been directed by the national NRCS office to review state and field office efficiencies and effectiveness then submit a plan to improve efficiency. The plan was mandated by the Federal OMB (Office of Management and Budget) to maximize conservation delivery and include a 1% reduction in overhead costs, to be achieved by the end of the federal government 2008 fiscal year. The 1% savings will be \$30,000 required for NRCS-UT. Each state will insure an efficient conservation delivery system that will deliver conservation to farmers and ranchers at the least cost. Over a 5 year period, rent costs have increased nationally by 23%, salary and benefits have increased by 19%. In Utah rent has increased by

79%, and salaries have increased by 29% over the same 5 year period. Sylvia Gillen, NRCS-UT State Conservationist, instructed to develop a plan that will define the key support to the conservation partners, and utilize a watershed delivery system. The plan needs to maintain and enhance the linkage between state, area and field offices, with emphasis on program, technology and engineering. He reported on the loss of irrigated land by 2015 will be around 400,000 acres across the Wasatch Front. The proposed plan will retain the 3 area offices in Ogden, Price and Richfield. Then, there would be 9 watershed servicing teams or units will be developed will be spread throughout the state. It was proposed to pilot 5 mobile offices. The plan proposed to reduce the number of NRCS-UT District Conservationist from 18 to 9. Implementation of the efficiency plan is waiting of approval at the national NRCS Headquarters.

CALENDAR OF FUTURE EVENTS

2007 UT Conservation Field Day: June 7 in Canyonlands CD (Escalante area)
Bear River Symposium/NPS Water Quality Conference: Sept 5-7, 2007 in Logan
Last 2007 UCC Meeting: November 7 in St. George
2007 UACD/UtahPCD Annual Convention/Conference: Nov 8-9 in St. George Dixie Center

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned 2:07 p.m. Commissioner Blackham invited Commissioner members, alternates and partners to stay if they wished for the Utah Partners for Conservation & Development Directors Council meeting.

Sherie Edginton, Conservation Program Secretary

K.N. "Jake" Jacobson, UCC Administrative Officer